CONCLUSION

Year 2000, though a relatively simple problem in its origin, is very complex to eradicate. This complexity stems, in large part, from our ever-increasing dependency on technology in the course of our daily business and personal lives. This dependency has made it challenging to root out and exterminate this bug.

We are encouraged by the progress being made by the larger companies to prepare for year 2000, and are cautiously optimistic about the ability of these companies to withstand even unforeseen problems with minimum disruptions to the services they provide. It is important to remember that in many industries, these large companies serve the vast majority of consumers. For example, over 92 percent of the people who receive phone service fall into this category. And while the large telephone companies cannot guarantee that customers will have no Y2K related problems, we generally concur with their assessment that for most of their customers phone service disruptions will not occur, or be minor and remedied quickly.

We remain concerned about smaller companies, however. Many of these companies have adopted a systematic approach to addressing Year 2000 with completion deadlines dangerously close to millennium rollover, leaving little time for delays from vendors or remediation as a result of problems discovered in the testing process. And whether in telephone, cable, broadcast or wireless, many small companies have not adopted systematic approaches to addressing Y2K, a course that we believe is necessary to adequately address the problem. Companies that do not follow a systematic process similar to the one outlined in this report risk missing not-so-obvious elements that could negatively impact their services if a Y2K problem were to occur.

It is also extremely important that companies continue to work together to share information and solutions. As we have seen from the work of NRIC, the Telco Forum, ATIS, and CableLabs, to name a few, pooling resources and sharing solutions are vital to addressing Year 2000. Information sharing will only become more vital as the new year approaches and time to correct problems runs short. Therefore, we continue to encourage companies to work together and to take advantage of the work that has already been done in identifying Y2K problems, testing, and contingency planning.

Thus, we will continue to monitor the progress of the industry and we will redouble our efforts with respect to the small companies. This will include maximizing our response rate where it is low, and updating the information in this report accordingly. We will also continue to work with our industry partners to reach out to these smaller companies, to advocate the adoption of a systematic approach and to offer resources for information sharing and solution building.

In closing, our collective task is daunting. But it is not unlike other apparently insurmountable challenges that have confronted the telecommunications industry specifically and the country generally. We are committed to meeting this challenge and we will continue driving toward that end.